

10/05/2009 This Week in Congress

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October 5, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress."

Preserving Seniors' Access to Medical Supplies

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives passed legislation I sponsored that would preserve access to important medical supplies for Kansas seniors. Patients depend on pharmacists for information and counseling to ensure they receive quality products and medical services. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has required pharmacies that provide certain medical equipment and supplies to obtain an accreditation in order to dispense these items to Medicare patients. This new accreditation requirement will place a tremendous financial burden on local pharmacies.

We should be encouraging our pharmacies and other medical professionals to provide care to their communities, not burdening them with cost-prohibitive regulatory requirements that do not increase patient safety or expand access for patients. The House-passed legislation would extend this accreditation deadline to January 1, 2010, and give Congress the time it needs to sufficiently address this issue and allow pharmacists to continue caring for their patients. The legislation has been sent to the Senate where it is likely to act on the measure in the upcoming week. [Click here to read more on this issue](#) and [click here to watch my speech in support of this legislation](#).

Kansas Couple Honored as "Angel in Adoption"

On Thursday, I met with Brandon and Melissa Hoffman after nominating them for the 2009 "Angel in Adoption" for their advocacy of adoption issues and care for special needs children. Through the Angels in Adoption program, Members of Congress may highlight the good work of one of their constituents who works to improve the lives of children through adoption and foster care. While they were in Washington this week, Brandon and Melissa were honored at an "Angel in Adoption" ceremony hosted by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

Since 1998, the Hoffman's have adopted seven special needs children who were in the foster care system. Along with giving these children the gift of a permanent family, Brandon and Melissa began a ministry through their church two years ago called "Project Belong" to help encourage others to adopt children from foster care. [Click here to learn more about "Project Belong"](#).

The "Angel in Adoption" award recognizes extraordinary efforts of individuals who show compassion to improve children's lives. Brandon and Melissa most certainly meet the definition of extraordinary. They are making a real difference in the lives of children and truly are angels for those in need. [Click here to view a photo](#).

Attending a Hearing about Agriculture Research

I attended a hearing of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy and Research on Wednesday to review implementation of the research title of the 2008 Farm Bill. Among the witnesses was Dr. Rajiv Shah, USDA Undersecretary for Research, Education and Economics. I urged Dr. Shah to be an advocate for agriculture research, as it supports the most basic of human needs - the ability to feed and clothe ourselves. While other research areas have recently received additional funding, agriculture has been left behind.

I also pressed Dr. Shah about implementation of the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP). The program was instituted by Congress in the National Veterinary Medical Services Act of 2003 (NVSMA) to help bring veterinarians to under-served rural areas by offering assistance in repaying educational loans. The NVSMA was recently updated by the 2008 Farm Bill. The Administration had previously said it would issue loan repayment applications by September 2009, but failed to meet that deadline. Dr. Shah agreed to move forward with implementation of the VMLRP as soon as possible.

Opposing EPA Endrun around Congress on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This week, by signing a discharge petition, I joined with other House colleagues in an effort to force the House of Representatives to consider legislation that would prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from moving forward with new regulations that would limit greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. The regulations would require power plants, factories, large feedlots and farms, refineries and other large emitters to reduce greenhouse gases by installing the best available technology whenever an existing facility is modified or a new facility built.

The Administration should not move forward with these standards while Congress is debating the merits of climate

change legislation. The Clean Air Act was never intended to regulate greenhouse gases. For the discharge petition to be successful it must have the signatures of 218 Members of the House of Representatives. [Click here to read more.](#)

Working to Increase Transparency and Accountability in Congress

I sponsored two pieces of legislation this week that will increase transparency and accountability in Congress.

H. Res. 721: This legislation would require that any major health care reform bill that is to be considered by the House of Representatives be made available to the public 30 calendar days prior to a vote. This August, I heard the concerns of many Kansans. In my discussions it remained clear that Kansans are concerned about their health care, and the legislation that Congress is considering could drastically change the health care system in America.

On July 1, 2009, I was the first Member of the U.S. House of Representatives to sign a pledge to not vote for any health care reform package that I have not read and that has not been available to the American public on the Internet for at least 72 hours. Americans expect all Members of Congress to read and fully understand whatever health care reform bill comes to the floor of the House for a vote, and they deserve nothing less.

H. Res. 554: This legislation would amend the House rules to require that legislation and conference reports be posted on the Internet for at least 72 hours before the House votes. A broadly informed public is the cornerstone of our representative democracy. Rushing votes on complicated and important bills is not the proper way to legislate. Americans deserve to know what their representatives are voting on, and they deserve the assurance that their business will be conducted in a deliberate and transparent fashion.

Speaking at Animal Health Institute Annual Meeting

On Wednesday, I spoke to members of the Animal Health Institute (AHI) at its annual board meeting in Washington, D.C., to discuss current issues being considered by Congress. The AHI represents companies that invest in the innovations, research and science necessary for advances in pharmaceuticals, biologics and pesticides for animals to improve animal health. During the event, I talked about a recent resolution I supported to recognize the region from Manhattan, Kansas, to Columbia, Missouri, as the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor. Kansas has one of the largest concentrations of animal health and nutrition interests in the nation and recognizing this region as the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor will encourage continuing research and development for the animal health industry. Thank you to Ron Phillips, Vice President of AHI, for inviting me to speak.

Visiting Small Businesses to Learn about Jobs and Health Care Costs

Lead Horse Technologies, Inc.: On Friday, I visited Lead Horse Technologies, Inc. (LHT) to tour its headquarters in Junction City. LHT is a Health Information Technology company that is developing a clinical decision support system to support the practice of personalized medicine and to reduce the rates, severity and costs associated with adverse drug reactions. In order to reduce costs and ensure care quality, we need to upgrade our outdated health care delivery system through the use of new technology. Thank you to Dr. John Armstrong, LHT Co-Founder, Chairman and CEO, for his hospitality.

Abbott Workholding Products: On Friday morning, I toured Abbott Workholding Products in Manhattan to learn more about this manufacturing company's operation and its business during the recession. Abbott Workholding Products, which began business in 1954, makes chuck jaws, tooling columns and other workholding fixtures. Thanks to Carl Reed, CEO; Criss Mayfield, Director of Operations; and all the employees for their hospitality.

PKM Steel Service in Salina: Later on Friday, I toured PKM Steel Service in Salina. Growing from a one-man welding shop in Salina's South Industrial Area in 1962, PKM Steel Service is now one of the most modern and versatile steel fabrication companies in the Midwest. The strength of our Kansas communities and the strength of small businesses go hand in hand. During my visit, we discussed the need for less government involvement in private business matters. I was glad to have the opportunity to tour the facility and learn about its accomplishments in the steel industry. Thank you to Frieda Mai, President of PKM Steel Service.

In the Office

Chancellor Dr. Bernadette Gray-Little and Keith Yehle of Lawrence were in with the University of Kansas to discuss the university's role in the higher education of Kansans. David Blazer of McPherson was in with the National Cooperative Refinery Association (NCRA) to talk about climate change legislation. John Clemons and Connie Robinson-Clemons of Iola and Roy and Carolyn Turney of Emporia were in with Kansas Tree Farm to visit about forestry in Kansas.

Tom Ventura of Overland Park was in with YRC Worldwide to discuss pension relief legislation. Donna Shank of Liberal stopped by to tell me about adult education programs in Kansas. Keith Miller of Great Bend was in with the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) to discuss enhancing meat exports. Rod Holub of Manhattan was in with the National Association of Letter Carriers to update me on the U.S. Postal Service's financial situation.

Brandon and Melissa Hoffman of Hutchinson were in with the Angels in Adoption program. Brandon and Melissa were in Washington, D.C., to accept their award and to be recognized by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute in a ceremony. They also took a tour of the U.S. Capitol.

Michael Pettibone and Sarah Short of Goodland, Taylor Davis and Pam Lamb of Tonganoxie, Katy Ward and Kristi Henderson of Cherokee, Joey Platt and Elizabeth Peuchen of Salina and Amanda Meyer of Sabetha were in with the Family Career & Community Leaders of America to visit about technical education and other career opportunities. Jay Maxwell of Wichita was in with Pixius Communications to talk about rural broadband access in Kansas. Diane DeBacker of Topeka was in with the Kansas Department of Education to discuss federal and state education initiatives.

Debbie Logsdon, Ruth Ann Mullhatten and Sheree Kennedy of Wichita were in with the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace to talk about the aviation industry in Wichita. Tom Schneider and Jeff Herman of Olathe were in with American Companion Care to discuss legislation affecting independent contractors and the home care industry. Chuck Banks of Topeka, Rita Noll of Council Grove and Jeanne Johnson of Baldwin City each stopped by my office to visit this week.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Gary and Lana Jordan and Larry and Pam Strahan of Salina, Peter Carter of Hutchinson and Blake Entz and Craig Wiebe of Whitewater.

Very truly yours,

Jerry